



Inspection report

Birley Community Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 107096
LEA Sheffield

Inspection number 274295
Inspection dates 14 and 15 March 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs J Austin HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Hayfield Crescent
School category	Community		Birley
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		Sheffield
			S12 4XF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 2399002
Number on roll	571	Fax number	0114 2644956
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr N Drew
Date of previous inspection	September 2003	Headteacher	Mr H Wood

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	26 April 2005	274295

Introduction

When Birley Community Primary School was inspected in September 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in March 2005.

Description of the school

The school is much bigger than most primaries. There are 571 full-time pupils, including 75 in three reception classes. The number of boys and girls overall is broadly equal, but in Year 5 there are significantly more boys, and in Year 1 there are many more girls. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of the pupils who have special educational needs, including those with Statements of Special Educational Need, is above average. The percentage of the pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national figure. The pupils' attainment when they join the reception classes is in line with that expected for their age, with the exception of their communication skills, which are underdeveloped. Most of the pupils remain at the school throughout their primary education.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Birley Community Primary School is providing a good education for its pupils. This is the result of the headteacher's incisive and purposeful leadership, the hard work of the teachers and a carefully focused programme of training and staff development. As a consequence of teaching, which is good, and learning which is at least satisfactory, standards have risen and are now broadly in line with the nationally expected levels in most subjects. There are sound procedures for assessing the pupils' progress, but the impact of these is limited because the information is not being used fully to plan the pupils' learning. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall, and often very good; over the last year they have learned good work habits. Attendance has risen markedly and is now satisfactory. The curriculum meets national requirements and the pupils benefit from visits and a good range of additional clubs.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of September 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with leadership, management and governance, standards, the quality of teaching and assessment, and attendance. There has been good progress in relation to leadership, management, governance, teaching and attendance and satisfactory progress elsewhere, although standards in reading are too low. In addition, the school now meets statutory requirements with regard to the content of the governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus. All staff have received appropriate training on child protection.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is good. The headteacher has focused unwaveringly on improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards; he has been well supported in this by the staff and governors. There is a thorough programme for monitoring the school's performance. The resulting information is frequently and carefully analysed, informing decisions about the allocation of extra support and resources, and setting the priorities within the school's strategic plans. The capacity of the core subject co-ordinators to fulfil their responsibilities has developed considerably and they are making appropriate contributions to these plans. However, the role of other middle managers is not sufficiently developed. Improved systems for monitoring the school's progress, and appropriate training, have improved governance; the governors are well placed to hold the school to account.

What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However the key priorities are to:

- continue to raise standards, particularly in reading at Key Stage 1;
- continue to strengthen the role of middle managers;
- further develop the use of assessment to ensure that the pupils' individual needs are met so that they make better progress over time.

Achievement and standards

The pupils make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage and the majority reach the standards expected for five-year-olds. They can recognise and copy repeated patterns, identify a suitable range of letter sounds and give simple descriptions of the characters in stories. As a consequence of improved teaching, the pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 has been at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Nevertheless, it is impaired at times by shortfalls in the pupils' prior learning, due to weaknesses in past provision. At Key Stage 1, the results of the national tests in 2004 were in line with both national averages and the performance of similar schools in mathematics and writing; they were below average in reading. This is a significant improvement on the previous year's outcomes. At Key Stage 2, scores in English and science improved; they declined slightly in mathematics. The results in English were above both the national average and the figure for schools in similar contexts; more pupils reached the higher level of attainment than expected nationally. The results in mathematics and science were broadly average. In lessons, standards were generally in line with the age-related expectations. In the top sets, a number of the higher attaining pupils demonstrated attainment which was above the expected level.

Personal development

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are good and often very good. As a consequence of improved teaching and more engaging learning activities, the pupils are enthusiastic about their work. They collaborate effectively in pairs and small groups, sustain their concentration and follow instructions promptly. Higher staff expectations and greater consistency in applying whole-school behaviour management procedures, have resulted in a much-improved climate for learning. Movement around the school is very well ordered and the pupils treat their environment with respect. Behaviour in assemblies is exemplary. There are no reported incidents of bullying.

Attendance has risen significantly since the previous inspection and is in line with the national figure. There are effective procedures for tracking the attendance of both

individuals and groups of pupils. In partnership with the senior inclusion officers from the local education authority (LEA), a suitable range of activities has been implemented to promote good attendance. The pupils are actively involved in these through their newly formed school council. They are proud of these initiatives and can explain clearly why good attendance is important. This approach has strengthened the school's capacity for sustained improvement in attendance. Punctuality, both at the start of the day, and to lessons, is good.

The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and assemblies make a positive contribution to this. In a Key Stage 2 assembly, the pupils were encouraged to reflect on the nature of giving and extend their understanding of sharing and care. They co-operate well in class, and are courteous to one another and to adults. Good relationships are characterised by the high levels of reciprocal respect shown by both pupils and staff. Achievements are recognised and celebrated. The pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall but there are limited opportunities for them to find out about cultures other than their own.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved significantly and is now good overall. At the last inspection in 2003, a fifth of the teaching was unsatisfactory. In this inspection, all the lessons were satisfactory or better, and over half were good or very good. Where teaching was satisfactory, there were far more strengths than weaknesses. The school's sustained efforts to improve the quality of teaching have achieved a consistency, which has eliminated the uneven progress characteristic of previous years. Most lessons were well planned, prepared and organised, and the intended learning outcomes were shared with the pupils from the start. The teachers' questioning was effective and there was a good focus on developing speaking and listening skills. There was a sensible balance between teacher exposition and the time provided for the pupils to engage in tasks and activities. Methods were varied, and often involved practical activities, which helped the pupils to apply what they had learned and deepen their understanding; for example, in mathematics lessons through games and competitive work in groups.

In the best lessons, the teachers had a good knowledge of their subject, classroom management was strong and the pupils were encouraged to take an active part in learning. The teachers had high expectations; they exemplified and modelled the standards they wanted, and were vigilant about the pupils' work rate. By using well-focused questioning and requiring the pupils to demonstrate what they had learned, the teachers carefully ensured that everyone was fully involved.

A few weaknesses occurred where teaching was satisfactory, mainly related to insufficient challenge for the potentially higher-attaining pupils and ill-matched support for the lower-attaining pupils. Classroom support staff and parent helpers made a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning, particularly when supporting groups in the completion of tasks. They were, however, insufficiently involved during the introductions and endings to lessons; for

example, in supporting the assessment of learning by observing and recording the pupils' responses to the teaching.

Assessment procedures have improved but are an underdeveloped area of the school's work. Information from National Curriculum assessments, tests and teacher assessments has been collated and forms the basis of targets for improvement in English and mathematics. The pupils' progress, measured against these expectations, is starting to be monitored but the full potential of the system has yet to be realised. The transfer of assessment information between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and between all classes generally, has improved. Marking is completed regularly and conscientiously, but sometimes fails to point out to the pupils how to make their work better. The school's ability to identify underperformance is hindered in some year groups by an over-reliance on the use of worksheets.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and based on national requirements. The school has addressed the areas criticised in the inspection of 2003. There are sufficient opportunities for the pupils to develop their writing skills across a range of genres. Resources for science have been enhanced and are now adequate. While the amount of investigative and problem-solving work in science and mathematics has increased, there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to devise their own experiments. The school's provision for special educational needs is satisfactory and conforms to the national code of practice.

The school pays due regard to the pupils' safety, health and well-being. There are appropriate procedures for child protection. Good use is made of the space for pupils to enjoy games and physical exercise and there is a broad range of extracurricular activities, including art, dance and music clubs. The school was recently awarded a Gold Active Mark by the Sports Council. Healthy eating is encouraged by the provision of fruit for children in Key Stage 1 and all the pupils are able to drink water in class. Pupils are beginning to work on an allotment, recently acquired by the school.

Links with parents and the community have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Pupils are encouraged to think how they might make a contribution to the local area by giving their time and, in addition, local tutors help with after-school clubs.

Leadership and management

The leadership of the headteacher is highly effective. With drive, enthusiasm and commitment, he has provided clarity of educational direction, the effective systems required to achieve improvement and the training needed to implement these successfully. As a consequence, a reinvigorated staff has worked hard to introduce the required changes. The role of the core subject co-ordinators has developed substantially; they are contributing appropriately to reviews of progress in their subjects and to plans for future improvements. However, the co-ordination of other subjects and aspects is underdeveloped. The management structure is efficiently promoting communication both within and between year groups, and key stages; this has resulted in consistency of provision, which secures equality of opportunity for the pupils.

The school's strategic planning is well founded on the priorities arising from its rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures. The planning process is highly responsive to the school's changing needs.

Governors are playing an appropriate part in the leadership of the school. As a consequence of regular visits, and briefing sessions with a specific focus, they are well informed about the school. Strengthened membership, a revised committee structure and relevant training have enabled the governing body to develop its role as a critical friend to the school.

The LEA has been responsive to the school's needs in providing a range of effective support. This has included assisting the core subject coordinators to develop the skills required to fulfil their roles; helping in the school's project to improve the pupils' writing; and providing coaching in teaching and learning.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Birley Community Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in September 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI and Additional Inspectors in January, July and December 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of September 2003.

In March 2005, four HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

During the visit 41 parts of lessons and three assemblies were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, a representative of the LEA and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of September 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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